

EDINBURGH 2010

(Centenary of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference)

MISSION IN HUMILITY AND HOPE

Introduction

The time to celebrate the centenary of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference is approaching. To be true to this memory, however, there is need for much more than nostalgia. Edinburgh 2010 is the proposed hub for an international round of initiatives and events geared to find direction for Christian mission in the 21st century.

The World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 proved epoch making in its day, offering a first glimpse of the church as a truly global missionary community with deep roots and vibrant life on every continent. It gave rise to the International Missionary Council in 1921, subsequently to the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948 and to their merger in 1961. It inspired both the contemporary ecumenical movement and movements for world evangelisation such as the Lausanne Committee created in 1974.

Thoughts of 2010 have been gaining momentum over the last five years and in June 2005 a small but representative group of mission leaders and thinkers gathered in Edinburgh to form concrete proposals. The centenary of the Conference in 2010 is envisioned as an occasion for challenging global missionary movements. Can we do for the 21st century what Edinburgh 1910 did for the 20th, i.e. catch a vision and set an agenda which will give direction and energy to missionary movements?

In important ways Edinburgh 2010 will be different from Edinburgh 1910.

1. Rather than being centred in Edinburgh, a polycentric approach will be taken. Facilitation will be offered by a variety of centres in different parts of the world. In 2010 it is anticipated that significant events will take place not only in Scotland but in many locations around the world.
2. Whereas 1910 was confined to mainline Protestantism, the participants in 2010 will be drawn from the whole range of Christian traditions and confessions. Particular effort will be made to involve new and indigenous streams of Christian witness from different parts of the world.
3. Instead of being largely limited to the North Atlantic, there will be an intentional bias to the South, recognising that Christianity's centre of gravity has moved markedly southwards during the past century. The process will aim to be truly worldwide in its scope.

The major instrument of preparation for Edinburgh 2010 is a round of commissions; an echo of the 8 commissions which reported to the 1910 Conference. The subject matter of the commissions has been carefully chosen to engage with the great challenges facing church and mission in the 21st century.

Each commission will be hosted by a suitably equipped centre which will be responsible to build a network of mission thinkers and practitioners who have expertise and experience to bring to the particular topic in view. The host centres will be located in a variety of contexts worldwide but each will aim to engage a fully international network of participation.

Three important adjuncts to the commissions have been proposed.

1. A realistic look at where we have come from by means of a penetrating – and in places painful – historical survey of Christian mission since 1910. This will aim to be comprehensive in covering global trends, regional factors and prominent issues.
2. An informative look at where we are now by the creation of an Atlas of Global Christianity. This will reflect the ground-breaking Statistical Atlas of Christian Missions prepared for the 1910 Conference and show the global spread of Christianity in the ensuing years.
3. An international art exhibition, on the theme “Who is Christ?”, as an event for 2010. This will draw on Christian art worldwide and create an exhibition which will be accessible both physically and on the web.

There still exists a high degree of flexibility in planning for 2010 but the hope is to generate a unique resource for the world church through the new commissions and to feed the fruits of their efforts into one or several events assessing the challenges of a new century and hearing the missionary call of God for our changed world in 2010.

The Formation of an International Council

For such an ambitious project a coordinating body is needed: to provide leadership, to guide the planning process and ensure that the eight proposed commissions work in a consistent and coherent way. It is recommended that an International Council be formed to serve for the five-year period 2006-10. It will aim to include a broad cross-section of world Christianity. Organisations hoping to be involved in marking the centenary or to participate in the common study process leading up to 2010 are invited to nominate representatives to serve on the Council. These representatives will be empowered to share in the decision-making process of the Council, without having to refer back to their home organisations every time a decision needs to be taken. Organisations will be asked to cover the costs of their representatives. The centres hosting the commissions will also be represented on the International Council. It is recommended that the Council should be formed on 1 January 2006.

It was agreed by the International Consultation held in June 2005 that its members (listed below) would form an Interim International Council with responsibility for leading the process from June to December 2005. It was further agreed that the Towards 2010 Scottish Council coordinate the work during this period.

The Interim International Council formed a sub-committee to prepare an organisational and financial plan for the Towards 2010 process with membership as follows: Kwame Bediako, Frans Dokman, Jacques Matthey, Fergus Macdonald, Birger Nygaard, Kenneth Ross.

The New Round of Commissions

Essential to the work of the Edinburgh 1910 Conference, and of abiding value, were the findings of the eight think-tanks or ‘commissions’. The new round of commissions has been warmly welcomed as a useful and appropriate preparation for the centenary. The Towards 2010 Scottish Council received many suggestions as to subject matter for the new commissions. The International Consultation reflected intensively on this in order to identify key issues for Christian mission in the

21st century and the topics listed below were identified as calling for the establishment of commissions for Edinburgh 2010.

Recognising the global character of the church today, it was agreed that the organisational base for the commissions should be a web of institutions located in different parts of the world. Each will need: high academic standards; strong links to church life and missionary outreach; and a sufficient communications infrastructure. Each commission will develop a fully international network to bring the highest qualities of reflection, insight and experience to the complex issues found at the interface between the Gospel and ever changing patterns of human belief and behaviour.

Following are the suggested titles for each commission, an outline of the subject matter and key questions to be addressed. The suggestions provided should be regarded as provisional – a starting point from which each commission will develop its particular approach. Commissions will be asked to gather, evaluate and share models and stories of good practice.

Already there is widespread enthusiasm for the project but it needs to engage a still wider circle if it is to achieve its objective of being representative of world Christianity. Your involvement and participation are invited. If you are struggling to discern God's direction for Christian mission in the 21st century and to discover the fresh energy of the Holy Spirit for outreach in Christ's name, then this initiative is for you.

The Eight Commissions

1. Foundations for mission
2. Christian mission among other Faiths
3. Mission and postmodernities
4. Mission and power
5. Forms of missionary engagement
6. Theological education and formation
7. Christian communities in contemporary contexts
8. Mission spirituality for the Kingdom of God

1. Foundations for mission

The task of this commission will be to explore how a Trinitarian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit relates to the theory and practice of mission; how the confession that God has a missionary identity impacts Christian witness; how a discernment of the Trinitarian God's inner relationships and love impacts ecclesiology, community life and society. The meaning of salvation will be considered in its biblical witness and in relation to freedom from every form of slavery in every context and culture. The commission will consider the interfaces between the Trinity, mission, salvation, ecclesiology and scripture.

Key issues and questions

1. The relation of the Trinitarian nature of God to our understanding of Christian mission.
2. The relation of Christology to mission theology and practice.

3. The relation of the work of the Holy Spirit to mission theology and practice.
4. How does our understanding of the mission of the Triune God affect our ecclesiology and church practice?
5. What do we mean by salvation, present and future? What is its link to conversion, baptism and participation in the sacramental life of the church?
6. How does our understanding of salvation affect the way we do mission?
7. How does mission engagement affect our biblical hermeneutics and vice-versa?

2. Christian mission among other Faiths

This commission will investigate ways of witnessing to Christ while acknowledging the religious plurality of a world experiencing a resurgence of religious belief and an escalation of conflict. It will explore the theological meaning of religious plurality reflecting on how it bears on Christian soteriology and missiology and address questions of conversion, proselytisation, dialogue and encounter. It will be invited to explore issues such as religious fundamentalism, persecution, ‘secret’ and ‘churchless’ believers and the continuing growth of many different forms of religious conviction. Studies undertaken under this commission will as much as possible be conducted together with or in consultation with representatives of other faiths.

Key issues and questions

1. Developing our theological understanding of the presence of non-Christian religions in the world.
2. The nature of the Christian proclamation to people of other Faiths and how we understand salvation in relation to those of other Faiths.
3. What is the meaning of “world evangelisation” today?
4. How do we bear witness to the uniqueness of Jesus in a multi-religious world?
5. How does a pneumatology defined within a Trinitarian framework affect our understanding of the significance of other religions and the nature of our mission?
6. How do we understand the activity of spirits, as understood within traditions in which they play a prominent role?
7. What is the significance of New Age and other religious movements for Christian mission?
8. How do we understand syncretism?
9. How does the mission activity of other Faiths affect Christian mission?

3. Mission and postmodernities

The commission will be asked to take on the issues raised by the new phenomena of postmodernity and their significance for mission. This will involve an investigation of 21st century thought structures, religious beliefs and practices as well as ethical principles in our world of information

technology. It will also require consideration of the influence of post-colonialism, economic structures, internationalism and engagement (or disengagement) with institutions and particularly with institutional religion. The commission will discern commonalities and particularities in postmodern developments in different regions of the world

Key issues and questions

1. What do we mean by postmodernity/ies, and in what contexts do we see its/their influence?
2. What is the relationship between postmodernity, globalisation, and neo-colonialism?
3. How does postmodernity affect understanding of the basis of Christian faith, and hence of Christian mission; particularly in and from Europe?
4. What are the promises and potentials of postmodernity/ies for new understandings of mission?
5. What is the relationship between believing and belonging, both with regard to Christian discipleship and to the agencies of mission?
6. How do we understand and engage with postmodern patterns of community, including virtual communities on the Internet?
7. What have been the effects of postmodernity on Christian mission in Europe and in other regions? What is similar from region to region? How is postmodernity perceived by churches in the South? How will present and foreseeable developments affect churches and their mission in all regions? What response needs to be made?
8. How do we tell the biblical story to those who embrace postmodern relativism and are suspicious of all metanarratives?

4. Mission and power

The commission will recognise that mission is practised in a world shaped by various forms of power: spiritual, political, military, financial and international; raising issues of culture change, human rights, ecological sustainability and inequalities in the production, distribution and consumption of resources. It will consider tensions and asymmetries resulting from the exercise of power and how these affect the sharing and communication of the Gospel message and life. It will assess the function of both power and weakness in our understanding and practice of Christian mission.

Key issues and questions

1. Power within the church; power between churches; power between mission bodies and churches. Can mission be a form of manipulation? What strategies are needed to guard against exploitation?
2. Power between church and state: in the different contexts in which we find ourselves how can Christians ensure that their relationship to the state does not compromise loyalty to their faith? Is state protection for missionaries justifiable?
3. Idolatry of the market: how does the 'idolatry' of the modern market economy affect Christian faith and mission?

4. Internalisation of power structures: how can we guard against unexamined presuppositions, blinkered thinking, cultural conditioning and adverse spiritual powers? How can we be remade in God's image?
5. Reconstruction of power: can political reconstruction foster democratic processes? How does structural and political violence affect the witness of the Gospel?
6. Creative power: is there a positive and creative use of power in mission? How can missions avoid being subverted by the human will to power? What is the role of vulnerability in mission?
7. Indigenous peoples: how can we proclaim the Gospel without destroying indigenous cultures?

5. Forms of missionary engagement

The commission is invited to recognise and consider the huge variety of groups, organisations, trends, methods and new expressions of church life involved in mission today. It will seek to discern where initiative lies in today's missionary movements. It will be forward looking in assessing patterns, initiatives and developments as they emerge and considering their implications for the future. It will treat issues of mission strategy, diversity and cooperation and identify problems of conflict and misuse of resources.

Key issues and questions

1. The primary role of the local church in mission: what does it take for the local church to become the primary missional agent through the priesthood of all believers? How is the local church related to the universal responsibility of Christian mission?
2. What forms of cooperation are appropriate to mission today? How may reciprocal partnerships best be developed?
3. What forms does "mission in poverty" / "mission without power" take?
4. In what ways can those in centres of power receive the gift of the Gospel from missionaries who come from the disempowered peripheries?
5. What are the implications of recent developments in cross-cultural mission: South-South, South-North? What is the future and role of the Western missionary movement? What is the future and role of the missionary movement in and from the South?
6. The role of media in evangelization.
7. How do we formulate mission strategy that is biblically based, theologically informed and ecclesiological responsible, yet concrete and operational?

6. Theological education and formation

The commission is to examine the connection between the catechetical and missional mandates of the church. It will consider how to strengthen the missional aspects of the training and formation of every member of the church, as well as the ordained and lay leaders. Included in the study will be educational methodologies, theological study, character development, spiritual formation and the contemporary context. The commission will further examine the relation between academy and society, clergy and laity, local and global issues, resources, relevance and gifts.

Key issues and questions

1. How can every member of the people of God be motivated and empowered for mission?
2. How can formation of mission spirituality become integrated into theological training programs?
3. How can the study of missiology become an integral part of the theological curriculum? How can mission perspectives be integrated into every theological discipline?
4. The role of accreditation in relation to mission and ministry.
5. How can churches best develop relevant curricula for local contexts?
6. Specific training for cross-cultural ministries and for those involved in reconciliation ministry.
7. Catalysts for theological training and formation where theological institutions are lacking.

7. Christian communities in contemporary contexts

This commission will focus on the variety of Christian communities as they draw on different traditions and engage with specific contexts. It will take cognisance of such issues as urbanisation, immigrant communities, migrant workers, affluence, poverty and virtual worlds. It will note underlying forms of Christian expression including such concepts as world view, language, customs, traditions, inculturation, transformation, etc. It will examine ways in which churches can become holistic healing and reconciling communities, expressing both the welcoming and the transforming character of Christ's gospel. It will explore what is involved in deep-level conversion.

Key issues and questions

1. How do adjectives of Christian community such as *discipling, healing, witnessing, contextual* become lived realities in today's world?
2. What is involved in being the church in the cities and mega-cities of today?
3. How can the local church be an agent of the kingdom of God and a source of healing and reconciliation?
4. What is the true identity (the "core DNA") of the church? How does it manifest itself in different denominations and cultures?
5. Ethnicity – the tension between homogenous and multi-ethnic churches.
6. Church life in Diaspora communities.
7. HIV/AIDS – does Christian mission bear some responsibility for the spread of the virus? How can mission contribute to the struggle to stop the pandemic?
8. What other forms of ill-health call for particular attention from practitioners of Christian mission?

8. Mission spirituality for the Kingdom of God

The commission on mission spirituality will seek to articulate a motivation and dynamic for mission that is rooted in the Kingdom of God. It will draw on the experience of the early church, of Christians from all ages, as well as that of new Christian movements, and of the many new churches in the South. It will seek to understand mission in relation to such concepts as new creation,

spiritual gifts, renewal, reconstruction, identity, service and holism. It will explore the role of the Spirit and of the church as signs and portents of the goal of all endeavour in the glory of God.

Key issues and questions

1. What shape does Christian mission take when it has the Kingdom of God as its ultimate horizon?
2. What is the proper place of the natural order in mission spirituality?
3. Prophetic witness: challenging the "principalities and powers" of human institutions with "signs and wonders" and God-given spiritual authority.
4. Love of enemies; reconciliation and healing through the power of the Cross, and witness through self-emptying, humility, and sacrifice.
5. How can we form new and creative relationships with Christians of all traditions, given our diverse understandings of mission, both locally and at international level? How can we form new and creative relationships with fellow human beings beyond the church?
6. How can we be faithful to our Christian confession while being open, adventurous and discerning in encounter with representatives of other religions?

Institutions presently considering hosting commissions are:

Akrofi-Christaller Centre, Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana
Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia, Trinity Theological College, Singapore
Chicago Center for Global Ministries
ISEDET, Ecumenical Centre for Higher Education, Buenos Aires
Nordic Institute for Mission and Ecumenical Research
Southern African Missiological Society
United Theological College, Bangalore

At this stage this is a provisional and by no means final or exclusive list.

Coordinating hosts are to be selected on the basis of:

1. Geographic and denominational diversity.
2. Academic excellence.
3. Engagement with the church and its grassroots.
4. Connection with mission practitioners.
5. Sufficient communications infra-structure.
6. Research interests and resources in the given area of study.
7. Financial commitment – together with network resources.

It is envisaged that the centres selected will work as part of a network of institutions in their particular context. From this local base they will be responsible to coordinate a worldwide network of prayerful study in their particular area of responsibility.

In order to allow the participation of a broad constituency, it was agreed that there would be a need to ensure the effective participation of Orthodox, Pentecostal and Roman Catholic institutions.

It is hoped that the commission centres will be appointed by mid 2006.

Transversal themes

It was recognised that a number of “transversals” will need to be developed, i.e. important themes which will run like a thread across all eight commissions. Some of these, e.g. Women and mission, call for a specially constituted group to ensure that they take effect. Transversals will include:

- Women and mission
- Reconciliation and healing
- Contextualization
- Authentic Discipleship
- Subaltern Voices

The kind of critical analysis which would be offered by each transversal is exemplified by the following proposal in regard to Women and mission:

Women and mission

Women and mission is envisaged not as a commission but as a separate group that will observe the process of each of the commissions with the brief of (a) ensuring that women's perspectives and issues are properly represented (b) effecting coordination among the commissions on these issues and (c) dealing with issues of Women and mission that do not find place elsewhere.

Key issues and questions

1. What is Good News for women?
2. Power used against women.
3. Women's power.
4. Machismo.
5. Eco-feminism.
6. Agents of mission.
7. Theological education, ordination and feminist theology.
8. Women's spirituality.

The associated project on the history of the 20th century missionary movement will give full consideration to the contributions that women have made to mission.

Participants at the June International Consultation

Co-Chair

Philomena Mwaura, International Association for Mission Studies
Lalsangkima Pachuau, United Theological College, Bangalore, India

Kwame Bediako, Akrofi-Kristaller Centre, Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana
Steve Bevans, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago
Nico Botha, Southern African Missiological Association

Ruth Bottoms, World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism
Frans Dokman, International Association for Mission Studies
Rose Dowsett, Global Missiology Track, Mission Commission, World Evangelical Alliance
Tormod Engelsen, World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism
Kofi deGraft-Johnson, Church Mission Society, Anglican Communion
Michiko Kyoko Ete-Lima, Council for World Mission
Sebastian Kim, College of York St John, University of Leeds
Moonjang Lee, Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia, Trinity Theological College, Singapore
Carlos Rodriguez Linera, SEDOS, Service of Documentation and Studies on Mission, Rome
Wonsuk Ma, Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Philippines
Fergus MacDonald, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization
Jacques Matthey, World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism
Nestor Miguez, ISEDET, Buenos Aires
Birger Nygaard, Areopagus Foundation, Denmark
Miguel Palomino, Latin America Graduate School of Theology

Secretariat

David Kerr, University of Lund
David Miller, International Christian College, Glasgow
Kenneth Ross, Church of Scotland
Jack Thompson, University of Edinburgh

Participation and Prayer

Prayer for this process is the primary form of participation that is needed and invited. Since it is an initiative which is seeking to engage with today's realities at a spiritual level it will only be as strong as its life of prayer.

The hope of the Interim International Council is that the process will become as widely participative as possible. Therefore if you, your organisation or institution are interested in being informed about Edinburgh 2010 or if you would like to apply to participate in the preparations for the event/s then please complete and return the form below.

<p>Please tick the relevant boxes and return to:</p> <p>Towards 2010, World Mission, 121, George Street, Edinburgh, EH2 4YN, UK.</p> <p>kross@world-mission.org</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wish to be kept up to date with developments as they happen. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wish the organisation of which I am part to be represented on the International Council. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wish to receive further information about commission no..... 	

Name
Organisation/institution
Address
E mail address